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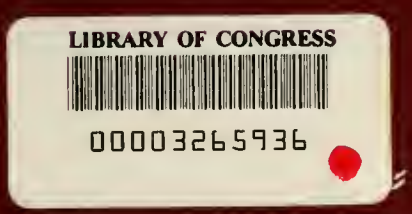


CHRISTMAS IN THE OLDEN TIME

CHRISTMAS

IN

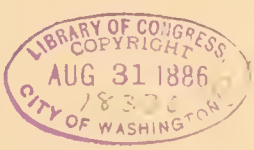
THE OLDEN TIME

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT

33

ILLUSTRATED



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CASSELL AND COMPANY (LIMITED)
1887

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CHRISTMAS IN THE OLDEN TIME.

HEAP on more wood! — the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer.
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honor to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung:
That only night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen:
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the mistletoe.

Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's-head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassail round in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;

Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savory goose.
Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made;
But, oh! what masquers richly dight
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

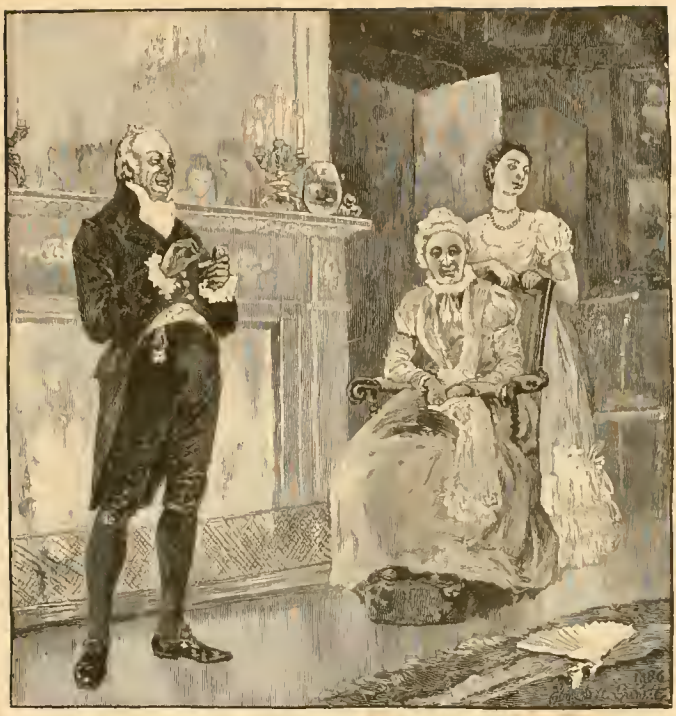
ARTISTS.

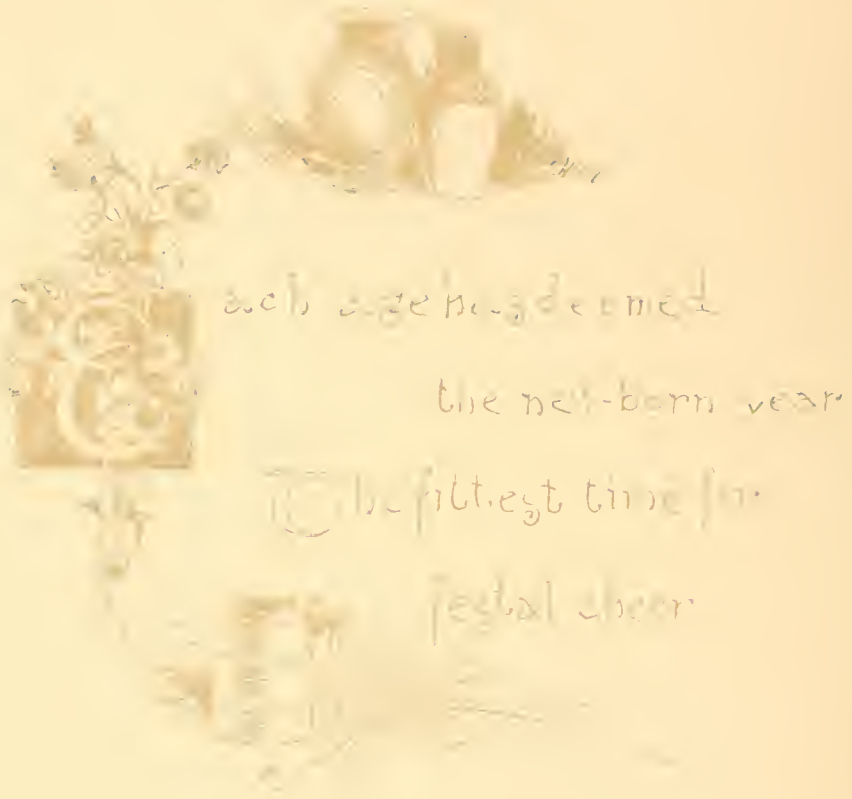
EDMUND H. GARRETT,
HARRY FENN,
J. STEEPLE DAVIS,
HENRY SANDHAM,
CHILDE HASSAM,
H. P. BARNES,
GEORGE A. TEEL.

Illustrated, Engraved, and Printed under the supervision of

GEORGE T. ANDREW.

CHRISTMAS IN THE OLDEN TIME

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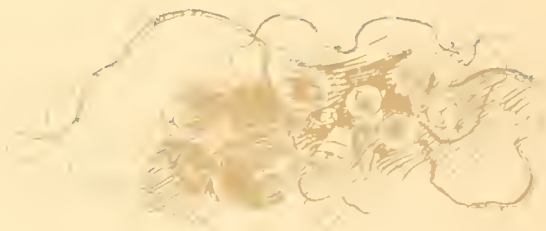

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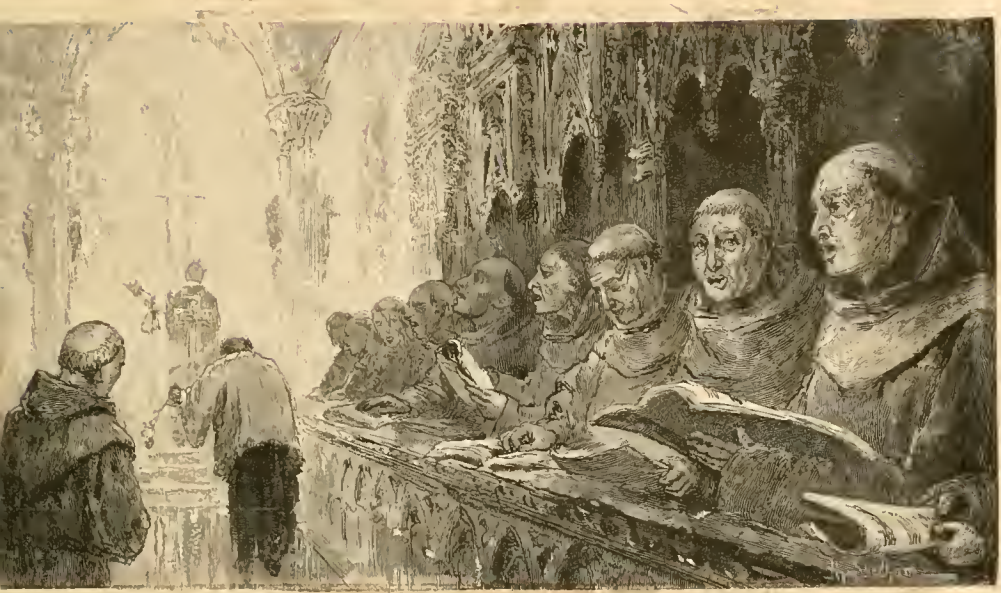

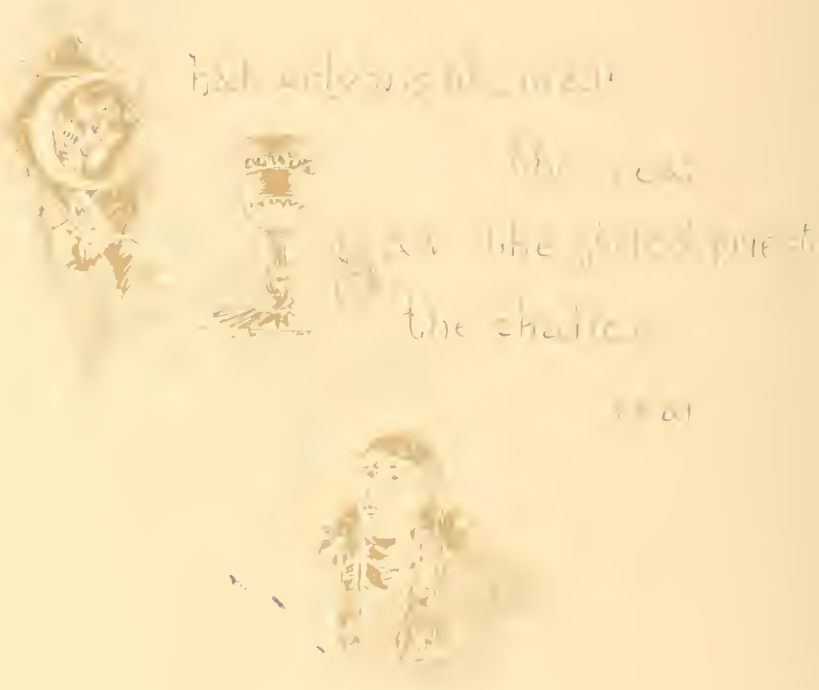

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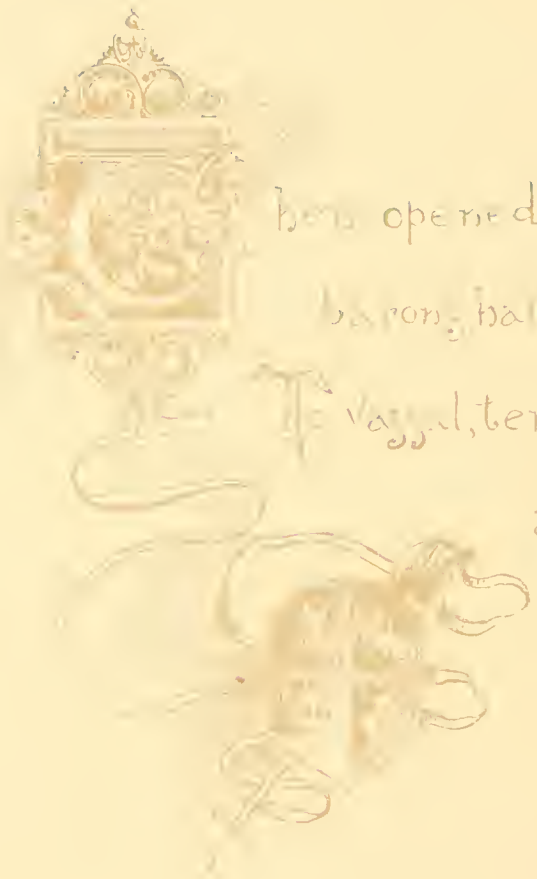
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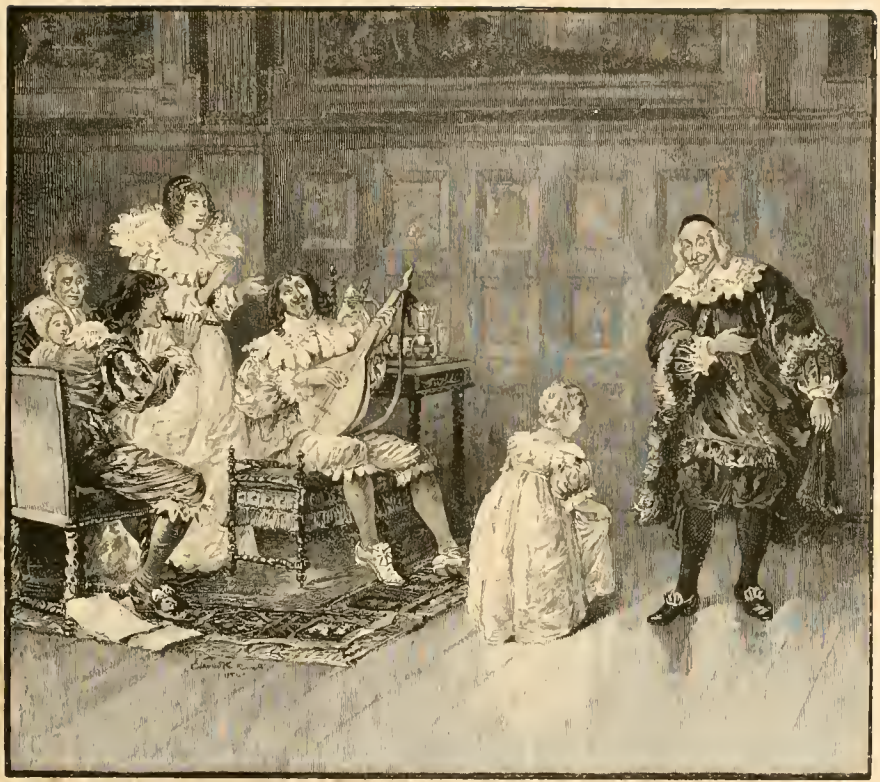

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FORTUNE

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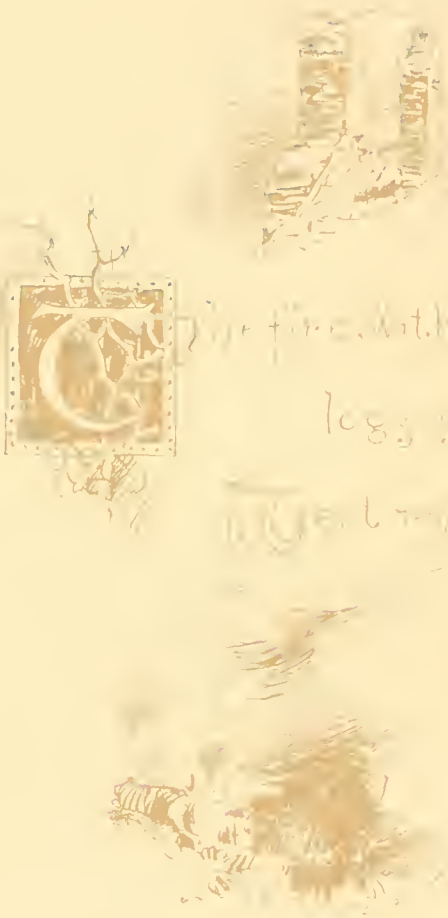

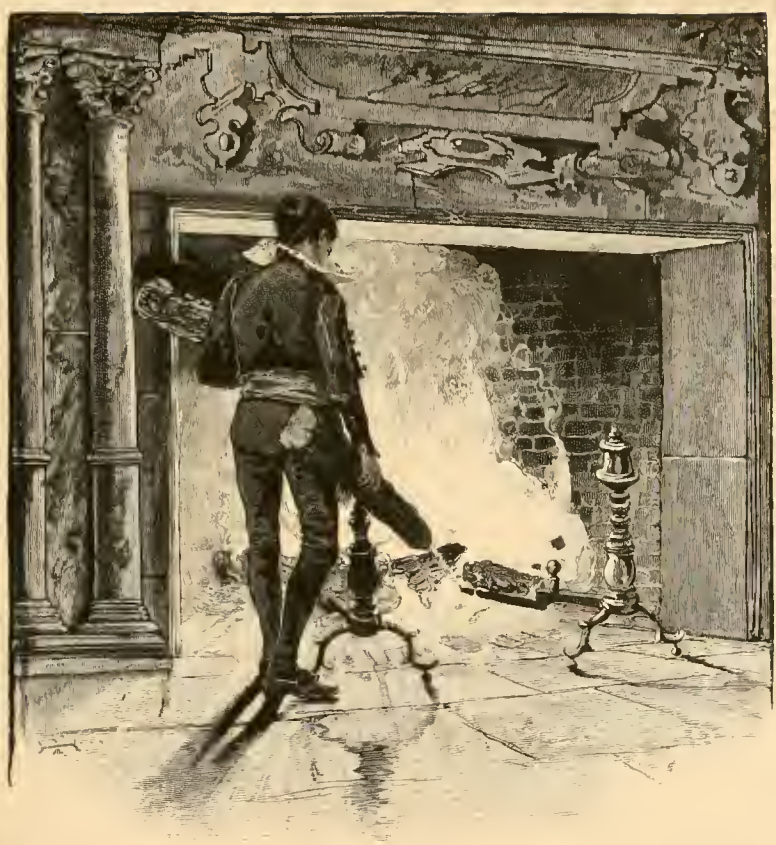

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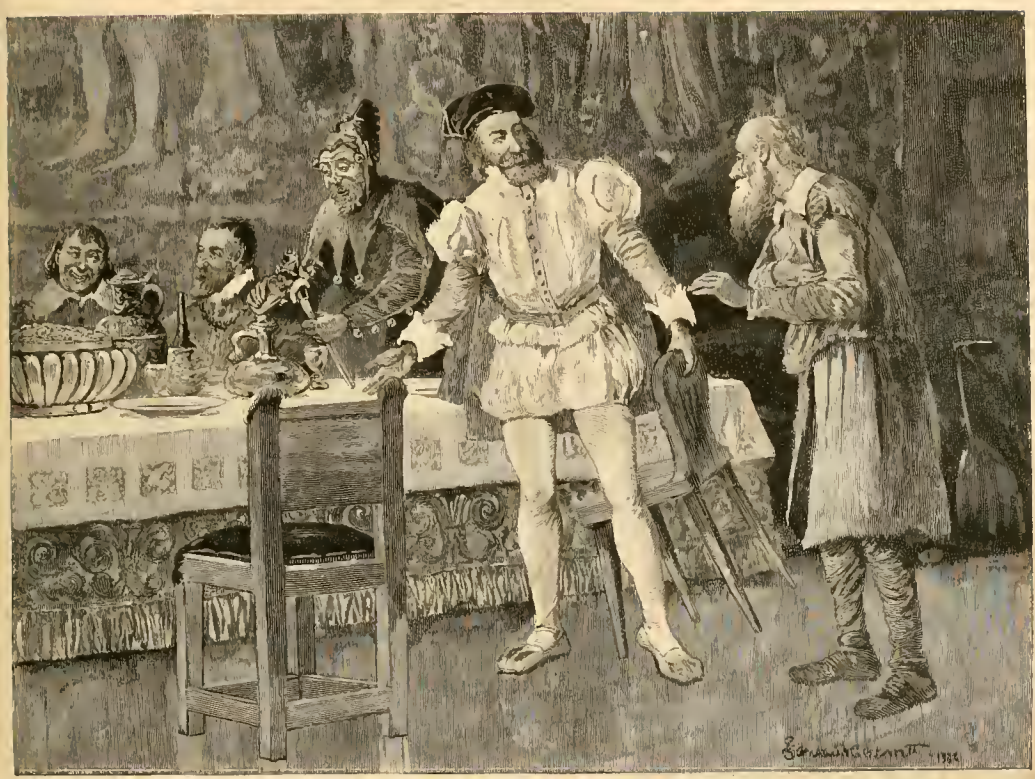

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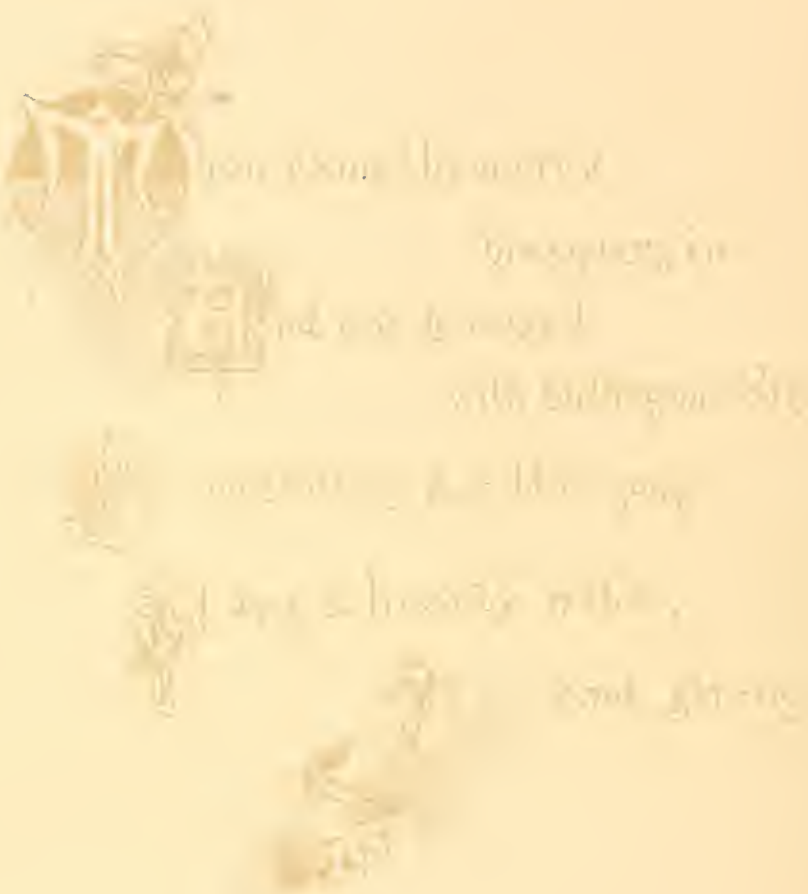

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